

**A STUDY ON E-RESOURCES IN INDIGENOUS MEDICAL
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN THE INSTITUTE OF
INDIGENOUS MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO
SRI LANKA**

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Abstract

In broad sense, e-learning (electronic learning) can be defined as teaching and learning by the use of any electronic media such as radio, television, telephones, CDs/DVDs, e-books, websites, Learning Management Systems (LMS) etc. But the term 'e-learning' is most commonly used for the use of computers and the Internet in teaching and learning. In Sri Lanka, most of state universities use electronic learning systems for delivering learning content and for student evaluations in addition to classroom teaching. Specially most of the medical faculties use LMS to distribute course materials and submit student assignments.

It is important to know how Electronic Resources (E-resources) are being used in higher educational institutions, which offer degrees related to indigenous medicine (Ayurveda, Unani & Siddha) and identify the problems faced in improving ICT applications in indigenous medical education.

The objectives of the study were to find out the existing E-resources used by those institutions and level of usage; to find out the students' perception towards the use of E-resources; and to find out the factors affecting, challenges and barriers for using E-resources in indigenous medical education.

Out of four state university affiliated institutions offering indigenous medical degrees in Sri Lanka, the Institute of Indigenous Medicine (IIM) affiliated to the University of Colombo was selected for this study. At the time of the study, the institute was planning to implement an LMS (<http://lms.cmb.ac.lk/iim>) and planning to introduce the LMS first to 3rd year students. A sample of 80 third year students (out of 150) following Ayurveda (BAMS) degree was selected. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Seven hypotheses were developed in order to know whether gender, knowledge level of English, and level of teacher's assistance have impacts on usage pattern of E-resources. ANOVA was used for hypotheses testing.

According to the findings search engines (80%) and websites (60%) were the mostly used e-resources. E-books (35%), Audio/Video CDs/DVDs (20%) and online scholarly databases (5%) were the other used e-resources. Currently the institute does not subscribe to any scholarly databases. The majority of the students (54%) use e-resources more than 3 hours per week. Students use e-resources mostly for getting additional information (74%), for assignments (68%) and for downloading course materials (56%). Thirty six percent of the students use e-resources for research. The students have a positive perception towards e-learning. However, they have a moderate feeling about the motivation from their academics towards using e-resources.

According to the results of hypotheses testing there is no any affecting factor for usage of e-resources and perception ($p > 0.05$) among the independent variables considered (gender, knowledge level of English, and level of teacher's assistance in e-learning). These findings were contradictory to the findings of previous studies conducted in foreign universities.

Cost of hardware and software (69%) and lack of physical resources (55%) were the major barriers in implementing e-learning. Full implementation of the LMS, subscribing to scholarly databases, conducting training programs to students and academic staff, inclusion of web based teaching and assessments to the curriculum are the major suggestions to improve e-learning in the institution.

Keywords: *E-learning, Indigenous Medical Education, Learning Management System, Institute of Indigenous Medicine, Information and Communication Technology.*